

Silent One

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Summary: Piccolo gives birth to a handicapped child. This is the story of how he copes with it.

1. Silent One: Chapter 1

> <meta name="Generator"> _silent

A/N: I am rather new to DBZ, and have only seen it to the end of the Freeza saga. Forgive me if anybody is OOCâ€¦I'm trying to portray them as close as possible to the way I've seen them act on the show. I've also never written beforeâ€¦.at least nothing that I've written has been put up. Please review so I know whether I "stink" or "shine" as my parents say. ^_^ I suppose you could call this fic alternate universe. Well anyway, here we go!

Silent One

> Chapter 1

The air was alive with electricity. Lightning flashed overhead, as if some massive beast were ripping the sky open with its claws. Thunder roared across the valley and echoed off the mountains like the voice God Himself. The trees all bowed down to the whims of the wind as rain beat everything into submission.

A lone figure staggered through the valley, the wind blowing the rain into his face and onto his body. Lightning flashed to illuminate a hint of dark purple, a hint of navy blue, a lot of green, almost as much white and bits of pink and red. Another flash illuminated a pair of dark onyx eyes. Cloth fabric whipped in the wind as a tall shadow fell over a rock.

In the midst of the storm, Piccolo fell against the rain-battered rock, clutching his chest in pain. His cape fell around him in folds, almost giving him the appearance of a wounded dove with broken wings. The rain was running down his face like tears, giving his green skin

a sparkling sheen, and the thunder drowned out his hollers and curses of pain.

Water. He needed to find the waterfall. Dragging his eyes open again, Piccolo slowly rose and staggered like a blind man towards the waterfall, reaching it after what seemed like miles. He collapsed next to the water and plunged his hand into it's cool depths, ignoring the lightning flashing above him and the rain that relentlessly pelted him as he took a long drink. Almost as soon as he swallowed the last drop, Piccolo felt his innards contract and started to vomit until he had regurgitated everything right back up again. He lied there, panting for a few moments as a few false-alarm dry heaves cruised up his gullet, then stood up and looked up towards the sky.

"What is happening to me!?" He cried out to the storm, getting no reply and not expecting one. The words left his mouth in a hoarse cry, and it took the last of his strength. As soon as Piccolo spoke the words, lightning struck a tree near him and sparks flew. He collapsed into unconsciousness from the pain, the thud of his body hitting the ground dulled by a loud thunderclap as smoldering debris rained down around him and the flames of the stricken tree illuminated his rain-soaked features.

> Gohan awoke early, having slept through the storm because of his training. He used to be scared to death of thunderstorms, but not anymore. After all, Piccolo had made himself something more worthy of being afraid of than a stupid noise from the sky anyway.<p>

For a moment as he lied there in bed, Gohan thought of his "second father", and how he'd changed his whole way of living. Sure, Piccolo was tough, cold and mean at times. But he could also be a really nice guy when he wanted to be. Piccolo let him stay up as late as he wanted. He never made him study, except for spars, but at least spars were fun to Gohan now. Books got boring after awhile, but Piccolo always had something new and interesting to try out.

"I'll go see him!" Gohan said aloud with a smile, jumping out of bed and climbing into his gi, which looked like a miniature version of the one Piccolo wore. "Waitâ€¦I can't just go running out. Mom would notice. Looks like I'll have to sneak out. Sorry momâ€¦" He cast a sorrowful glance to his bedroom door before climbing out the window and breaking into a run towards the valley.

Piccolo was still lying where he passed out the night before when Gohan entered the valley. In fact, Gohan was going and looking in every place he thought Piccolo would be. The river was the last place he looked, and the second Gohan saw his teacher down, he ran to his side. The Namekian man was just lying there on his stomach, his turban having come halfway off when he hit the ground and allowing one of his slender green antennae to poke out from underneath. One of his arms was submerged up to the elbow in the stream, the skin on his fingertips having become wrinkled from being underwater for so long. His cape was lying in wrinkled folds over his muscular body with soot from the burning tree covering it. It made him look almost fragile, the way he seemed so vulnerable.

Gohan grabbed one of Piccolo's shoulderpads, pulled with all his might and managed to roll him onto his back. "Mr. Piccolo! Are you

OK? Mr. Piccolo!" His voice rose higher in pitch with each sentence as he shook his sensai.

Piccolo didn't move, even when Gohan risked pinching his nostrils(a trick he only got to try once and got quite beaten for later!). When that didn't work, Gohan put his hands on Piccolo's chest to shake him harder, and just as quickly snatched his hands away when he felt something. He blinked and lifted the bit of white fabric that covered Piccolo's chest to look at what he had felt a moment ago. What he saw caused him to grimace and look away momentarily.

There was a huge lump in Piccolo's chest. It was stretching his sternum way out of proportion, and Gohan could literally see the bone and veins through the skin because of the bulge, which moved slightly with his heartbeat. Reaching down, the young boy pressed down on the lump to see if it would move. It did, but barely, and it was rock hard. The pressure also roused Piccolo slightly, and he gave a faint groan of pain as he groggily slapped Gohan's hand away. He was unconscious again before his hand even impacted the boy's.

"Mr. Piccolo?!" Gohan shook him when he saw him move. He got no other response, so he knew he had no choice.

Struggling with all his might, Gohan hefted Piccolo over his shoulder and held onto him with both arms as he returned home. The weight slowed and tired him a lot, but he kept going anyway. _Man! I wish dad was here. He's a lot stronger and faster than I am._

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 _Chichi was very upset, and the broken dishes on the kitchen floor were proof enough. She was pacing back and forth over the broken glass when she finally spotted Gohan landing outside. When she saw that he had Piccolo, fear was added to her angry emotions as she charged outside like a ruptured duck.

"Where have you been!? What is going on here!? Why is Piccolo here!?"

"Mom! Please! He's sick and I don't know where else to take him!" Gohan panted, exhausted from carrying Piccolo so far.

Chichi sighed and put her hands on her hips, "Oh, all this insanity is going to give me wrinkles! I'll let you take him inside, but if there's any sign that he's going to do something rude or cruel, he is out! Do you understand me?" Her voice rose in pitch with each word until it became an almost unbearable screech.

"Yes, mom." Gohan said tiredly as he hefted Piccolo over his shoulder, half-carrying, half-dragging him to the large couch and until he could set him down on the soft cushions. Then he sat down and panted, exhausted.

Piccolo was starting to come around again, making himself known by moving a little and groaning. "Unghâ€¦" He grimaced and grabbed the lump on his chest hard, feeling as if someone were pounding a railroad spike into his sternum. Every movement was incredibly painful, but Piccolo managed to wriggle out of his cape and turban, tossing them on the floor and letting a sigh of half relief and half

pain.

"Mr. Piccolo? What's wrong with you?" Gohan asked meekly, standing at the foot of the couch.

"Iâ€|" Piccolo's face contorted in pain for a moment, "â€|don't know." His hand clutched at the swollen lump under his sternum as if it were going to explode. Of course, there was no way of knowing whether or not it would. "It's been there for weeks." He doubled over, sitting up and leaning far over the edge of the couch as another nasty wave of dry heaves overcame him.

Gohan rushed to Piccolo's side and grabbed his shoulders to keep him from falling face first onto the floor. He waited for the retching to pass before asking, "Would water help?"

The Namekian shook his head, his slender antennae swinging listlessly from his forehead like dead plant stems. "I just puke it back up."

"Gohan!" Chichi snapped from the doorway, waving a wooden spoon around like a weapon. "Get to your room and study! Right now!" She looked at Piccolo, "And you! No getting up and walking around, you understand?"

Gohan cringed, "Yes, mother." He looked at Piccolo, "I'll be back later."

Piccolo pretended not to hear Chichi and managed a half-smirk for Gohan. "See ya kid." He waited until Gohan was gone before allowing the pain to contort his face again.

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_He really is sickâ€|_Chichi thought to herself as she watched the panting, sweaty Namek try to relax on her couch again. The lump in his chest seemed pretty nasty looking too, and she couldn't help but move closer to inspect it. The instant she reached down to touch it, however, Piccolo's hand snapped out and grabbed her wrist.

"Don't." Was all he said, and Chichi backed off with a small gulp.

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All this worrying is going to give me wrinkles! She thought as she winced and returned to the kitchen to finish cooking and clean up the shattered dishes.

> Day turned to night, and Piccolo didn't improve at all. In fact, he had gotten worse, and was retching almost constantly. Chichi had left a large bowl next to the couch so that he wouldn't have to force himself into the bathroom, but Piccolo hadn't needed it.<p>

A blast of pain woke the Namekian from a sound sleep, and he jerked into a sitting position just in time to start into an even stronger fit of dry heaving. Piccolo fell back onto the couch again, too exhausted to sit up and the pain only worsened. Sweat dripped down the side of his face, his body started to shake and he couldn't stop

gasping for air.

Kami Almighty! If I'm gonna die then just let me die already! He thought as he tried to stand up. His knees wobbled, then gave way, and he fell onto his hands and knees. Tears ran out of his eyes from the pain as it started to come in waves. It was like something inside was swelling or rupturing. The dull, but agonizing pain was starting in the area where the lump was and radiating up to his jaw. Every heartbeat brought more pain, more retching and more silent tears.

The beads of sweat on Piccolo's forehead glistened as he slowly crawled towards the bowl, making every effort not to let the pain cause him to sob. He dug his nails into the floorboards, no longer caring what sort of damage he did to the house as another powerful wave of retching came over him. Only this time, near the very last heave, Piccolo felt something very sour and slippery run out of his mouth. Looking into the bowl, he could see a slimy yellow liquid settling into the bottom. The next wave came over him, causing another blast of pain as blood joined the slimy yellow fluid.

"What now?" Piccolo asked himself hoarsely through the sour taste of the ooze and his own blood, small dribbles running down his pointed chin.

His answer came in a wave of pain so powerful that he cried out involuntarily. The cry was quickly cut off, changing to a gurgle and then silence as something started to swell in his throat.

Gohan, with his wild hair totally disheveled, jerked awake when he heard Piccolo's muffled cry and threw aside his bedsheets. Momentarily amazed that the noise didn't wake his mother, he ran out into the living room to find Piccolo lying on the floor, curled into a ball. The Namekian was clutching his throat with one hand and his chest with the other, his body seeming to twitch like a dying insect. A yellowish fluid mixed with blood was oozing from his mouth, forming a puddle on the floor around his head as he pressed his sweaty cheek against the cold wooden panels and squeezed his eyes shut. His breathing was extremely labored, almost non-existent as his muscular chest and back heaved.

"M-Mr. Piccolo?" Gohan whispered, drawing in a quick breath and moving to Piccolo's side. He watched Piccolo's glazed, bloodshot eyes open to look at him.

Piccolo opened his mouth to speak, but no sound came out when he moved his mouth. The only word that ever escaped his throat was Gohan's name. Then the waves of retching became more intense. He felt Gohan scoot closer, but he put his hand up to tell him to stay back, not knowing what he might do while in this state. Piccolo felt his body involuntarily jerk in a deep breath, and then his airway seemed to be pinched off. Another powerful, prolonged wave of painful retching followed, and he could feel everything in his body squeezing and pushing against a singular point. The slimy, blood-tinged yellow ooze was flowing freely from his mouth, just as easily as water is poured from a pitcher into a glass.

Gohan's eyes widened and he scooted back, whimpering as he saw

Piccolo's eyes seem to bulge out of his head from pain and possibly even fear. Loud, gurgling gag-like noises filled the silence as Piccolo managed to sit on his knees, still doubled over until his forehead touched the floor, his mouth falling open. Something had caused his neck to swell, and for a second it reminded Gohan of the way a snake looks right after it eats.

Piccolo screamed a silent scream as the prolonged wave of retching had forced his throat shut. The lack of oxygen was starting to make him a little woozy, and the world suddenly seemed unreal. He rocked drunkenly as the strongest wave of retching he would ever feel in his life overcame him.

Scared out of his mind, Gohan watched Piccolo suddenly crane his neck, his entire body seeming to grow stiff. A strange convulsion seemed to ripple up the Namekian's muscular green body, and the lump in his throat doubled in size almost instantly. Another convulsion rippled up his body, and the swelling moved forward, up behind his jaw. Gohan just stared with an open mouth. _What's happening to him!?!_

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"I'm gonna get my mom." Gohan started to get up, then felt Piccolo grab his arm. He took that as a no, so he squatted on the floor again next to his sick friend and wiped the tears out of his eyes. Then he heard a strange creaking sound and looked down at Piccolo again. Gohan just watched, about to scream, as the swelling that was in Piccolo's neck started to move forward. He looked away and covered his mouth, this time because his stomach was turning over. Remembering what he'd been told during the first fight with the Saiyans, the young boy gathered his courage and turned his eyes back to Piccolo.

Piccolo strained, clutching the swelling in his throat with one hand as it seemed to start to roll forward. More pain was added to what he was already in as the lump forced his jawbone out of its hinges. The lump hit his gag reflex, intensifying the retching even more. Sweat broke out all over his body as the final spasm forced whatever was in his throat into his mouth. Something slimy, smooth and shiny slid from Piccolo's gaping jaws and landed in his arms, followed by a gush of more slimy, blood-tinged yellow fluid. He didn't even see what it was, because all he could think to do was breathe as he forced his jaw back into normal position. Then his vision went dark as a brief unconsciousness claimed him. He slumped forward, the beads of sweat on his face and neck glistening in the faint light like thousands of sequins.

Realizing whatever was happening was over, Gohan warily moved to Piccolo's side. "Mr. Piccolo?" He asked quietly. There was no reply, except for exhausted breathing.

Gohan's voice seemed to rouse Piccolo, and he dragged his eyes open to look up at the boy. Never in his life had he ever felt so exhausted. He breathed for a moment, then managed to find his voice. "Gohan?"

"Are you OK? What happened to you? Something came out of your mouth, but I couldn't see what it was."

Piccolo's slender antennae gradually took on their usual half-erect position as he slowly dragged his upper body into an upright position and looked down, sweat dripping down his face. Gohan came closer too, and a look of shock came to his face. Piccolo had the same look of shock on his face when he realized what he was looking at.

Lying in the Namekian man's lap was an oval-shaped, shiny white egg.

And it already had cracks in it.

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To be continuedâ€¦

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2. Silent One: Chapter 2

> <meta name="Generator"> _silent2

Author's note: Please read the first chapter before you read this one. Spoilers are no fun! ^_~

Silent One

> Chapter 2

"Why did you throw up an egg?" Gohan asked, blinking in confusion at the cracked egg in Piccolo's lap. He drew his thick eyebrows together and twisted his lips to the side in thought.

Equally baffled, Piccolo replied, "Iâ€¦|don't know. I didn't even know I could make one. Only Guru could, or so I thought." He looked at the cracks in the egg and noticed that they were leaking the same fluid that he'd been puking up before finally expelling the egg itself.

"What is going on out here?" Chichi asked sleepily from the doorway to the hall. She was wearing a purple bathrobe and matching slippers, and her eyes were still mostly shut. Her shiny sable hair had been put into some order, but a few loose strands were still sticking up a little.

"Mom! Piccolo had an egg!" Gohan jumped up, leaving Piccolo to grumble about kids and their big mouths.

"Oh, that's nice - " Chichi turned to go back down the hall, then what was just said seemed to register in her brain. Her eyes snapped wide open and she wheeled around to face Gohan again. _"Nani!?!"_ She looked over at Piccolo and -sure enough- he was sitting on his knees, looking down at the egg on the floor in front of him. There was some kind of slime all over the floor around it, and she sighed mentally at the thought of the clean-up job that was going to be.

"Quiet!" Piccolo snapped, his large pointed ears pricked to a faint sound only he could hear. He watched the one crack split into several smaller ones. In a few minutes, the smooth off-white landscape of the egg's surface was covered in tiny canyons and valleys as the being within moved. Piccolo's onyx eyes blinked, then narrowed in confusion

as he leaned his ear closer to see if he could hear anything inside.

"I think it's hatching." Gohan looked at Chichi and grinned, running a hand over his wild hair, despite the fact that it didn't do much to tame it.

"This isn't happeningâ€|" Chichi swayed drunkenly and wobbled down the hall to her room. "I'm going back to bed! This isn't happeningâ€|" The door clicked when she shut it.

Gohan sighed and shook his head, then went back over to Piccolo and squatted next to the egg, making sure he didn't get into any of the slime that was vomited up earlier. Strange as it seemed, the goo had turned into Jell-Oâ€|or at least something made of the same substance. Experimentally, Gohan poked at a small piece of it, watching it jiggle; it felt warm, almost alive. Then he glanced over at Piccolo's chest to see if the lump was gone. Sure enough, his teacher's powerful chest muscles were back to their normal shape, although a large purple bruise marked where the lump had been.

The silence was shattered by a creaking noise and a faint gasp from Piccolo. Indeed, even he was curious about why this had happened. He looked at Gohan and shrugged his large shoulders in response to his questioning look, then turned his attention back to the egg, his lips becoming a straight line across the lower part of his face. The cracking seemed to stop, and everything became deathly still for a time.

The pain from what had happened was starting to wear off, and Piccolo's cold side was starting to surface again. As if to complete his change back to "normal", the tall green figure assumed his usual cross-legged position, crossed his arms and closed his eyes.

Gohan just blinked as another crack snaked its way around the egg. Piccolo's eyes snapped open again, and he turned to the egg just in time to see a hand burst through the largest crack, opening a crater in the egg's surface. Some of the shell clung to the wrinkled emerald skin as the hand withdrew once again. The egg did a half-roll as the hand poked out of the opening once again and started to push on the edge.

"Should we help it?" asked Gohan, almost unable to stand seeing the unborn Namek in distress.

"No." Piccolo replied sharply. "If he really wants out of there, he'll get out on his own." He turned his attention back to the egg once again. _I had no help when I was born, and I didn't have anybody either. I was always aloneâ€|_ "Gohan! Don't even touch it!" He added on when he saw Gohan reaching towards the crack-featured surface of the egg.

"But Piccolo! I don't think he can get out!" Gohan protested, a sorrowful look crossing his face. His lower lip stuck out slightly, and Piccolo gritted his teeth because he hated that look.

"Yes he can. Just give him time."

Sighing, Gohan sat down next to the egg and tried to peek into the hole. He couldn't see anything, so he finally just sat back and

waited. The egg started to move again after a short time, another set of fingers joining the first, pushing themselves through the jagged hole and pushing outwards. Very faint grunts could be heard as the little Namek struggled. It was a determined little thing, that was for sure, and Piccolo took note of that as the little hands widened the hole.

Yes, little one. I know you can do it. He thought as he watched the crack widen further. Gohan's eyes were threatening to pop right out of his head, the way they were open so wide. Piccolo just smirked for a moment, then watched the egg again.

The unborn Namek stopped moving for a moment, then the fingers started to work again, pushing the hard eggshell away. Before long, the baby's head popped out of the hole, his toothless mouth agape as he gasped for fresh air. Slime from the inside of the egg kept his eyes squeezed shut and plastered his miniature antennae to his forehead. Gohan fell over on his back in surprise because it happened so suddenly. Piccolo just watched the baby like a hawk, hardly even blinking. It was starting to dawn on him that this child was his. His son. His own flesh and blood. And he didn't want to miss a moment of this new life.

"He looks like you Piccolo." Gohan grinned after studying the baby Namek's features. He was right too. The infant seemed to be a miniature version of his father.

"I'm not surprised." Piccolo muttered as the little one stopped gasping and started to struggle to get the rest of his tiny body out of the confining prison.

With a lot of effort, the baby Namek managed to wriggle out of the egg, tumble end over end and land with a wet slapping sound in front of Piccolo. Gohan blinked and crawled over so he could see the baby better. Piccolo just reached down, curled his fingers around one of the newborn's tiny ankles and lifted him up, watching the egg-slime drain from his nose and mouth. When he was sure the child's airway was clear enough, he set him down again gently and used the back of his hand to wipe the rest of the goo off his face.

Piccolo had to press his lips together to hide a smile when the child tried to bite his fingers. The infant's dark eyes opened as he looked out at the world for the first time. The first face he saw was Piccolo's, and almost immediately, he started imprinting. Something Piccolo never got a chance to do when he was born.

"Wow! He's cute!" Gohan started to laugh, then got up, ran into his room and returned with a blanket.

It's like looking in the mirrorâ€¦ the older Namek thought as he looked at the younger one. He took the blanket and used it to clean the rest of the baby off, then wrapped him in it to keep him warm for the time being. Already, the child had fallen fast asleep.

"So what will you name him?" He asked, the excitement of his youth making it next to impossible to stay quiet for long.

Piccolo finally tore his gaze away from the baby to look at Gohan. For a second he looked at the little gold harp that had been embroidered onto his pajamas, then to his face. "I'll call him Tategoto." He bit his lip to keep from smiling openly again. Gohan just grinned and walked off to wake his mother up.

> (Author's note: Tategoto is the Japanese word for "Harp")<p>

> SIX MONTHS LATER
 It was pretty sunny and hot out in the valley where Piccolo lived. There was little or no wind at all, so the only place to take refuge from the heat was near the waterfall. At least there, Piccolo could meditate and let the cool mist wash over him after a hard day's training.

The only difference was that now he had to keep an eye out for Tategoto. The little guy was starting to crawl around, and was into just about everything. And, unlike Gohan, Piccolo couldn't leave him out alone yet. He was just a baby after all, and Piccolo didn't want Tategoto to grow up without a father.

"Tategoto, get away from there!" Piccolo shouted when the child started crawling after a dangerous lizard. Tategoto ignored him, and just kept reaching for the fire-colored lizard on the rock. The lizard's back was arching, and Piccolo was just in time to grab the kid before the lizard could strike. Irritated, the Namekian man looked at his son and said, "Tategoto, don't ignore me!"

Tategoto looked up at Piccolo, and his antennae drooped slightly. He opened his mouth, leading Piccolo to think he was going to say his first words already, but instead, a childlike whine came out. Piccolo sighed and picked his child up. "Maybe Bulma would know about this as much as I hate asking for help." He sighed again, "Or Chichi. I don't want to go asking her about this kind of crap. Heh she's scared enough of me as it is." With a final snort of amusement, Piccolo rose up into the sky and flew towards the Capsule Corporation building.

> Bulma's blue hair shined in the sunlight coming through the kitchen window as she finished cleaning up after Vegeta. The door had just banged shut to signify his departure to the gravity room. Then someone started banging on the door again.<p>

"What now!? Hold your freaking horses already!" Bulma slammed down the fork she was drying and stomped to the door, yanking it open, "Oh!" She gulped when she came face to face with a muscular chest that was covered by purple and white. Her eyes traveled upwards over a pointed chin, curving lips pressed into a straight line, a pointed nose and two dark onyx orbs. She met Piccolo's gaze and swallowed quickly. "Um hi Piccolo " She inched back a few steps and noticed the baby, dressed in a little white tunic and baggy pants, in the crook of his arm. "Who's baby is that?"

Piccolo's expression remained stoic as he spoke in his deep voice that, unless he was yelling, seemed to always come out in a whisper, "His name's Tategoto and he's my kid. I don't want a lot of crap about it either." His white cape fluttered as the wind's invisible fingers started to play about and caress it's light fabric.

"Well he's cute, aren't you, you little sweetie?" Bulma said the last half of the sentence to Tategoto. Just as he'd been ignoring everything Piccolo said, he ignored Bulma too. She cocked her head and glanced up at Piccolo with one slender eyebrow raised.

Piccolo snorted, "That's what I brought him here for. He ignores me"

Bulma thought for a moment, twirling a strand of her blue hair around her manicured fingernail. "You know—we should take him to a doctor." She watched a sneer start to crease the bridge of his nose. "Well, if he's sick—what can you do? You never know what can happen to the flu these days. You don't watch TV, so you have no idea what's on the news. There's a strain of encephalitis going around and—ah well—we should have him checked out anyway." She gulped

Tategoto wriggled in his father's strong grasp, snuggling to get closer. Piccolo unconsciously moved him closer as he said, "Fine. But if I have to sit for more than five minutes in there, I'm leaving. Got it?" He added the last words in a dangerously low tone, not even believing himself that he was doing this.

"Fine. I'll make the appointment." Bulma stated, grimacing as she turned away from the door and disappeared into the kitchen for a moment.

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As if any idiot doctors would know a Namek's anatomy anyway—Piccolo thought to himself, looking down at Tategoto with no expression on his face. Tategoto raised his antennae out of his face so he could see his dad, then smiled. His fingers rippled like a wave, then he let his antennae fall in his face again.

"Ahem." Bulma cleared her throat to get Piccolo's attention. When he gave her his usual scowl, she continued while half-shielded by the door, "They said we can come right away."

"Whatever." Piccolo shifted Tategoto to his other arm and was ready to take off when Bulma stopped him again. "What now?!"

"Are you really going to walk in dressed like that?"

"Does it matter?" he growled back, starting to get a tad annoyed.

"Well, you stand out enough as it is—" Bulma trailed off and inched behind the door a little more.

Rolling his eyes, Piccolo pointed to his chest as a yellow light covered him. His gi, cape and turban all faded in the glare and were replaced a yellow T-shirt with a purple sweatshirt underneath, blue jeans, a blue baseball cap and white tennis shoes. The word POSTBOY was written across the front of the shirt in big purple letters. "Is this any better?" He snarled.

"Much." Bulma eased past him and towards her capsule car. She gripped the steering wheel tightly as Piccolo climbed in beside her, not exactly liking being this close to him. After all, he was so unpredictable that she didn't know what he'd do next.

"Let's just get on with this." Piccolo muttered, settling Tategoto in his lap and crossing his arms. Tategoto just gurgled quietly and looked around until he finally fell asleep.

Piccolo ignored the stares he got as he carried Tategoto into the stuffy waiting room. The room smelled of disinfectant and was relatively featureless. But the most annoying thing to his ears was the overhead lights. The constant buzz was a chainsaw to his brain.

Fortunately, he didn't have to wait long. "Piccolo-san?" The nurse asked from the door.

Bulma stood up and gestured to Piccolo. "Over here."

"Ah yes. I'll just take your son to the back and we'll do a physical. You can wait here and you'll be called in shortly." The small blond-haired nurse said cheerily as she held her arms out to Tategoto.

"Hey! How come I can't go back there with my kid?" Piccolo retorted, reaching up to adjust his backwards baseball cap for the umpteenth time since he'd entered the place.

"Well, because he might cooperate better if he doesn't have a dad trying to tickle him and stuffâ€¦" The nurse cringed slightly, "It won't be long OK? Please, just stay here." She gulped quietly as the angry green man stared her down with his piercing black eyes.

"Ten minutes. Then I'm coming on my own." Piccolo growled, wishing he could just blow the roof off the place and take off. Social situations always made him a bit uncomfortable unless it was a fight. After all, he didn't exactly have social skills since he was pretty much a solitary person.

"O-OK." The nurse gently took Tategoto from Piccolo and carried him out of sight.

"Piccolo! Please don't do that again in here. You don't need a reputation." Bulma hissed.

"Shut up." Piccolo muttered, crossing his arms.

The ten minutes passed, and Piccolo was just starting to uncurl from the chair and charge back there when the nurse came walking back out.

"You can come in now. Doctor Tasho needs to talk to you anyway." She shrank back slightly and grimaced.

"Fine." Piccolo gestured towards the door, "Lead the way." When the nurse started to walk, he followed until he came to a room where a portly woman was just setting Tategoto down on the examination table to keep an eye on him.

The woman had a lot of curly red hair, and wasn't very attractive at all. _Heh, humans are getting uglier and uglier these days._ Piccolo thought as Dr. Tasho smiled and waved him into the room. She said a greeting in a voice that seemed awfully deep for a woman. Ignoring

the scared little nurse, Piccolo strode into the room where Tategoto was waiting, clapping his hands together and wiggling around since he knew his father was with him again.

"Good afternoon Piccolo. The physical is complete" Dr. Tasho started to babble on and on about how healthy and strong Tategoto was, but then she handed Piccolo a bunch of pamphlets as she started to talk medical babble about something else. He only caught the end of it: "we've run some tests to determine that it's total."

Blinking at the multicolored pamphlets in his hands, Piccolo sneered and said in a cold, quiet tone that vibrated the small room, "What are you saying about my son? I didn't catch all of that."

"Piccolo, your son is deaf."

—

To be continued

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3. Silent One: Chapter 3

> <meta name="Generator"> _silent3

Author's note: Anything in **is** sign language.

Silent One

> Chapter 3

The campfire crackled quietly, it's glow and warmth chasing away the chill of the night. A small emerald green form was sound asleep, wrapped in the corner of a white cape. Not too far away, a larger emerald green form was staring at the star-speckled sky and brooding silently.

—

My son's deaf Endlessly black eyes turned away from the stars and fixed onto the smaller sleeping form. _Did I do something to make him that way? Am I to blame? No_ how could such a thing be possible?_ The large Namekian slowly moved and sat down at the smaller one's side. _Maybe the doctor made a mistake_

— —

"Tategoto." Piccolo spoke in a whisper.

No response. Tategoto just kept right on sleeping, as happy as a baby could be.

Piccolo snapped his fingers right by the baby's ear. Still no response. Grimacing slightly, Piccolo steeled his nerves, put two fingers into his mouth and whistled as loud as he could. The noise echoed in the valley and grated on his nerves like nails on a chalkboard.

And Tategoto slept on as his father stared at him in silence.

What else can I do? I'll just put him out of his miseryâ€¦ Piccolo reached his large hand down towards the child and slowly curled his fingers around the tiny neck. One quick squeeze would do it. One quick squeeze would end a lifetime of pain. One quick squeeze to end a life the never really began. Tategoto awoke to the touch and his large eyes met his father's as a happy squeal came from his mouth. That innocent smile and bubbling giggle seemed to jam a sword into Piccolo's heart. Piccolo started to press his thumb down over the tiny bulge in Tategoto's throat that would someday be an Adam's Apple, causing the small child's air supply be cut off. The baby's innocent smile disappeared as a look of agony came to his face, and he struggled against his father's grasp.

For some reason, the disappearing of the smile did something to Piccolo's mind and made his eyes mist over. _No._ _I will not shed tears! I am not that weak!_ He found himself shaking his head violently as if to toss aside the strange emotions while releasing his grasp on Tategoto's throat. He watched him slump back against the weighted shoulderpads and cape that were lying on the ground. Almost instantly, the young Namekian baby started to cry.

Unable to stand the sound, Piccolo got up and flew away, leaving the child there all alone. Vulnerable to anything and everything. He flew as far as he could as fast as he could, until finally he could hear the child's cries no more.

How will I ever communicate with him? How will I teach him to fight?! Piccolo thought about this as he crossed his arms. His left elbow brushed something papery, and he looked down to see the pamphlets he got earlier were still stuck in his belt. They had migrated there from his pocket when he "morphed" out of the clothes he wore to the doctor's office. Out of curiosity, he pulled one of them out and opened it. Most of it just talked about the various types of deafness, but the back page had something rather interesting on it.

There were images of hands in all sorts of strange positions, and a letter of the alphabet was labeled under each drawing. Cocking his head, Piccolo copied the first picture. He formed a fist, keeping his thumb pointed upwards so it was parallel to the first joints in his fingers. Then he copied the second one by sticking four fingers straight out and curling his thumb in towards his palm.

It didn't take Piccolo long to realize that these hand signals stood for a letter in the alphabet. In a few minutes, the mighty Namekian mastered the entire Manual Alphabet, and managed to spell out his own name as well as Tategoto's. A glimmer of hope rose in his almost-frozen heart, even though it was going to be a long shot, and he quickly reached for the next pamphlet.

"Sign Languageâ€¦" He said aloud as he read the pamphlet. Then he remembered that he'd left Tategoto all alone. "If he can fight, it'll be worth being annoyed for a little whileâ€¦" Piccolo said aloud as

he rose into the air and returned to where he had left Tategoto.

Tategoto was asleep again, curled around the heavy shoulderpads of his father's cape. Piccolo reached over and pulled the cape around his small form, then sat back and finished reading the pamphlet.

—
I can't believe I'm doing this! Piccolo said silently as he landed in front of a rather nice looking building. It looked more like a house than a classroom, with many different types of flowers out in front and a nice red brick path up to the door. The building itself was white with a chocolate-brown slatted roof and a wood-paneling door. The large Namekian stared the place down for a few moments. Once again, he had changed into street-clothes, but something slightly less casual than last time. He was wearing an unbuttoned black flannel shirt with a white shirt underneath, and the three buttons under the collar were left undone so that the top of his pecs showed, and he was also wearing an expensive looking pair of blue jeans.

Tategoto gurgled from his position in the crook of his father's arm. Piccolo looked down at him and snorted. "Yeah, I know." Then he remembered that Tategoto couldn't hear him and that was the reason why he was here. He looked at the building again and sighed, "Well, I guess we gotta go inside." The tall Namekian man slowly walked towards the nice looking building and rapped on the door with his pointed nails.

"Come on in!" A light voice called.

Piccolo opened the door and was greeted by a blast of cool air from the air conditioning. Tategoto shifted slightly, his large eyes turning to look at his surroundings. Piccolo looked around as well, not seeing any of the people yet.

The room was decorated with all sorts of murals. Abstract colors and shapes. A large wall hanging with the Manual Alphabet decorated the far wall. There was only one person in the room, and she seemed to blend in so much that Piccolo didn't see her until she moved to stand.

She was a tall masculine looking woman, almost as tall as Piccolo, with chocolate skin, large dark brown eyes that were almost black and long sable hair that was pulled into a french braid. She smiled and said in a rich, sweet voice that gave away the fact that she had shouted the 'come on in', "_Konnichiwa_. You must be Piccolo."

"Yeah." Piccolo replied tersely, his deep voice seeming to boom throughout the entire room.

"Excellent. I'm Yasmine Davis, and I'll be your instructor for awhile." She extended her hand, but when Piccolo just blinked at the gesture, she boldly grabbed his free hand and shook it. "Welcome aboard!"

"Yeah." That seemed to be the only word that worked right in his

brain at the moment as he pulled his hand away and fought the urge to hit her. _Don't touch me lady._ Piccolo said silently. Tategoto gurgled and wiggled his fingers at Yasmine while his other hand kept a firm grip on his father's shirt.

Yasmine just smiled at Tategoto, then looked back up at Piccolo. "I suppose he's the reason you're here. C'mon and sit down so we can get started already." She gestured to the couch, then turned, walked back to where she was sitting before and sat down. The wooden floor creaked in slight protest as Piccolo followed and eased himself onto the couch while fighting off the urge to just leave this uncomfortable situation.

"Where are the others?" Piccolo asked absently as he put Tategoto down next to him. "I thought this was a class."

"You're the only one that signed up. But that's OK. I find it worth it to help one person make a difference." Yasmine cocked her head a bit and smiled brightly to reveal flawless teeth. "Soâ€|do you know the Manual Alphabet already or not?"

"You mean the fingerspelling stuff? Yeah." Piccolo answered. He was feeling uncomfortable, maybe even scared, there was no way to be sure. All he knew was that this woman was seeing him doing something because he cared for his son. _Why couldn't I just kill him?_

"Good. Show me what you got."

Sighing, Piccolo held out his hand and started to form the letters with his fingers. When he got to the P, Yasmine stopped him.

"What?"

"Your middle finger is supposed to point down, not outwards. It might get confused for an H. Here." She reached out and gently adjusted the position of his fingers. Tategoto, seeming oblivious of what was going on, happily clapped his hands together and babbled.

"Whatever." Piccolo did the right symbol, then continued through the rest of the little gestures until he had completed the entire alphabet.

"I think we're off to a pretty good start, Piccolo." Yasmine commented, pushing her braid over her shoulder.

Almost a year had gone by since Tategoto was born. It had been nearly six months since Piccolo had started learning to use Sign Language, and he became pretty good at it. Even still, he made a few mistakes. Tategoto was growing as well. He had gone from crawling to walking, and when he wanted attention, he had this annoying habit of grunting or clicking his tongue. When he wanted something, he'd usually tug his father's cape and point at whatever he wanted. Piccolo would often teach him how to get it for himself, but even still, he just couldn't shake the urge to keep looking over the kid's shoulder.

Good morning. "Good morning!" Yasmine spoke the words and signed

then at the same time to Piccolo as he arrived for the day's lesson with Tategoto not far behind.

Piccolo replied in silence with the same gesture, looking genuinely annoyed. **Good morning.**

"You always look like you've had a bad day. Cheer up." Yasmine laughed quietly and headed inside, shutting the door, "There's a few things we need to talk about anyway."

"Whatever." Piccolo loped to the now-familiar room with Tategoto scrambling along behind him. When he sat down, Yasmine started to speak.

"When he gets older, he's going to need an education."

"I'm going to teach him to be a fighter." Piccolo quickly replied, crossing his arms as his brow ridges drew together to complete his typical scowl.

"Oh really now? But what will you do when he's old enough to realize that he's different from most people? That he can't hear? Then what will you do?" Yasmine countered, the silvery tinkle of her voice taking on an edge of coldness. She leaned back on the couch and crossed her arms, glancing at Tategoto momentarily to make sure he was OK. "You only know how to talk to a deaf person. You don't know how to teach one. Sight won't be enough, you know. You gotta stimulate the other four senses that still work."

"I can do that just fine." Piccolo growled in a harsh tone. "Are you suggesting I put my kid in some school?"

She made a fist and moved her hand up and down, signing. **Yes.**

** **

"Bah!" Tategoto grunted as he knocked over an expensive vase and watched it crash to the ground. Yasmine jumped up and ran to his side. Piccolo brooded silently for a moment, then got up and walked over to where Tategoto and Yasmine were, looming over them both with his arms crossed.

That was bad. Piccolo signed to the boy when he had his attention long enough to do so. That was the first time he'd ever used the sign language outside of the lessons, and he did it without even thinking.

Yasmine just grinned. Perhaps she was getting through after all.

Piccolo landed out in his usual valley with Tategoto under his arm. Almost immediately, Tategoto scrambled away to go take a nap, and Piccolo sighed because now he'd have some peace for a few hours. He pointed to his chest and let the yellow glow cover him as his street clothes morphed back into his gi. Then he sat down on the ground indian style, crossed his arms and closed his eyes as he started to hum a monotonous note to ease himself into meditation.

form with a long white cape falling around him, and a sparkle passed over them. Small emerald fingers extended, a thumb pointed outwards, and the hand was raised so the thumb touched the forehead.

Father. Tategato signed.

"What's he saying?" Krillin asked, avoiding the blast of a party horn from Gohan.

"He's signing for his dad." Yasmine answered, bending down behind Tategato and putting a delicate chocolate-brown hand on his shoulder to let him know she was there. Tategato grinned and made a happy grunt with his throat without even realizing he was making noise.

"Cool." Krillin replied scratching his bald head, "Would you mind telling him that he's getting to be pretty big?" He added, noticing that Tategato seemed to look more like he was six or seven years old instead of just four. It was hard to get used to the fact that Nameks matured faster than humans.

"Not at all." Yasmine grinned in response as Gohan picked up the torn paper from the presents that had been opened earlier. **Krillin says you're getting pretty big.** Yasmine signed to Tategato.

Tategoto grinned brightly and signed back, **I'll be big like father someday.**

** **

"He says he'll be big like his dad someday." Yasmine laughed, patting Tategato on the head and standing up. "I believe that. He sure looks like him." She glanced into the shadows at Piccolo, who had his head down and his eyes shut as the sun illuminated half of his sharp-featured face. Piccolo just stayed where he was at the moment, a statue that had been draped in a majestic white cloth. Years of fighting had taught him that unnecessary movements could mean death, and the habit just happened to carry over to his everyday behavior.

Chichi straightened out the pile of books she had gotten for Tategato, but she wasn't sure if he'd ever use them. For all she knew, Piccolo would throw them out or burn them as soon as they got back to the valley. Most of the gifts consisted of clothes, but one was a small weights set. Piccolo found that might be useful for the first bit of training. After all, he couldn't leave Tategato alone like had Gohan, so he was going to have to try a different method and hope it worked.

A loud explosion of laughter woke Piccolo from his reverie. The kids were all swinging at a dragon-shaped pinnate, and at the moment, Gohan was the one trying his luck. He missed once, then hit it on the second try, but it didn't break. Krillin tried, managing to hit it once, but not hard enough to break it. Tategato was next, looking pretty comical while standing there with a stick twice as long as he was tall in his small green hands.

—
C'mon kid. I know you can do it. Piccolo found himself rooting for him silently. _Show 'em you're not a weaklingâ€|show me tooâ€|_

— —

The pinnate came down, then went up. Tategoto didn't move. Down it came again, and still, the little Namekian didn't move. The third time it came down, his head suddenly turned, he brought the stick up over his head and brought it down with such force that the pinnate broke in half. Toys and candy spilled out, and all the while, Tategoto kept bopping the broken pinnate and laughing. Gohan finally took the stick away from him and helped him get the blindfold off so he could see what he did.

—

_Perfect. _A sparkle moved from one onyx eye to the other, then faded.

"Humph. Looks like that deaf kid of yours is worth more than you thought." Vegeta huffed from the other side of the tree.

"Shut up." Piccolo retorted. "He's stronger than you think."

Vegeta just laughed and walked off, rudely leaving the party to go train. Piccolo growled at his retreating back, then turned his attention back to the group by the pinnate just in time to see Tategoto approaching with a huge smile on his face.

Did you see what I did? I broke it! He signed happily.

Piccolo smirked and signed back with ease, **Yes. I saw what you did. Good work.** He fought the urge to reach down and pat the kid on the head. After all, he was supposed to be the un-approachable, cold-hearted one around here. At one time he did have the name Demon King, but whether or not the name still stuck, Piccolo would never know.

Tategoto spied Yasmine approaching, a tall and dark shadowy figure. He ran over to her and signed excitedly to her, repeating the question he'd asked Piccolo. Yasmine laughed and signed back that yes, she did see and that she was proud. After that, she turned him towards the rest of the party, gave him a nudge and watched him run off to join the others. Then she stood up and kept walking over to Piccolo.

"He seems to get more cute every day." She said with an amused laugh.

"Cute?" Piccolo's pointed nose wrinkled, his frown deepened and his curving upper lip curled into a sneer. He turned his head slightly and his face disappeared into the shadows. His eyes, however, seemed to remain visible. Two black orbs peering out of the darkness.

Yasmine copied Piccolo's expression and did a fake growl, then

chuckled quietly and leaned on the same tree Piccolo was leaning on. "I bet you would be too if you didn't frown and sneer so much. It'll give you wrinkles."

"I am NOT cute!" Piccolo snarled.

Yasmine just laughed and brushed her hair back. She had it done up into several braids that hung down her back like a bunch of long, thin dreadlocks. "OK fine. You're not cute. You're sexy." She countered boldly with a laugh, just teasing. Little did she know that teasing Piccolo was like juggling armed explosives.

"Shut up!" Piccolo, more shocked by the comment than angry, pushed off from the tree he was leaning on as if to take off and leave. If he got any angrier, he might do something that would hurt a lot of people.

"All kidding aside, Piccolo, you're not as scary as you think you are. It's clear you care about your kid, so why are you always trying to hide it? And if I may ask where is his mother?" Yasmine pushed off the tree, but stayed where she was. She still had yet to know that Nameks don't have mothers. Piccolo hadn't told her that secret yet, but he was about to.

"He doesn't have a mother." Piccolo replied, keeping his back to her. He found it easier to talk to her if he didn't have to look at her. "And you don't know what I could do. If you did, you'd re-think your opinion of me." He added acidly.

"Oh? What happened to her?" She ignored his last comment.

"He just doesn't have one." He answered in a tone of voice that could freeze molten lava. "Nameks don't have mothers."

Yasmine blushed a little. "Oh well hm" Her lack of something to say caused Piccolo to smirk to himself as he started to lope towards Tategoto, who was kicking at the head to the pinnate he broke. He threw his cape over his shoulder and tapped Tategoto's shoulder to get his attention.

****It's time to go.**** Piccolo signed.

****What about the presents?**** Tategoto signed back, his brow ridges drawing together and his antennae drooping slightly.

****I will bring them too.**** He replied with a sigh, then let his arms fall to his sides. Tategoto nodded and approached his father, placing his small hand into the larger one. Piccolo's fingers gently curled around the tiny hand, and then he lifted off. Hovering there for a few moments, the Namekian man pointed to the pile of gifts and they lifted into the air. Piccolo did a 'come here' gesture with his finger, and the gifts moved to surround him and Tategoto, who was hanging onto his large hand with both of his tiny ones. He gave his son a small nod, glanced at Yasmine out of the corner of his eye,

then rose into the sky and disappeared into the distance.

Yasmine just shook her head silently like 'whatever'.

As he flew, Piccolo didn't notice the warning sign that had recently been placed next to the river upstream from the little tributary that he and Tategoto drank from. The sign said: WARNING! TOXIC SPILL. The reason Piccolo didn't see the sign was because he had to dodge the annoying helicopters flying around. The noise was battering his sensitive ears, so he just growled and got away from them as fast as possible, landing where he'd camped out the night before.

Night had fallen and a campfire lit a small circle of light on the ground. Tategoto was sitting by the stream, staring at the water. He knew what water was supposed to smell like, and knew that the smell wasn't supposed to be sour.

Piccolo had just filled his canteen, but had been mostly in the smoke of the fire. Because of the smoke, he didn't smell what Tategoto had. He was taking a drink when Tategoto suddenly ran over and slapped the canteen out of his hand, sending it sliding along the ground while it's contents spilled out. "Hey!" The large Namekian shouted. "What the hell!?" **What are you doing?** He signed quickly with a scowl.

Tategoto's young age prevented him from knowing how to answer the question in a way that his father would understand, and only signed, **Don't drink the water.**

** **

"Crazy kid. What is he trying to do?" Piccolo muttered, reaching over and picking up the canteen. He shook it to see how full it was. It was still half-full, so he gulped down what was left and then sat down again, frowning at Tategoto when he started throwing a small tantrum. He took off his cape and turban so Tategoto could lay down and sleep, but the young Namek continued to carry on.

The sour, metallic aftertaste in the water started to make itself known. Piccolo frowned, wondering why, but pushed it aside and settled against a rock with his arms crossed so he could get a good night's sleep. Tategoto's soft whimpering continued as he started to pace uneasily like a frightened animal in a cage, signing 'don't drink the water' to the empty air.

About a half hour later, storm clouds rolled in and it started to rain. The raindrops exploded in small sunbursts against Piccolo's skin, instantly waking him from his light slumber. Tategoto was still pacing, humming and moaning in agitation. Piccolo just watched him for a moment, then moved to stand.

"What is his AAH!" The large Namekian man was forced back down to the ground by a horrible cramp that had formed in his stomach. A cramp so bad that the pain almost matched what he had felt when he was regurgitating Tategoto's egg.

Tategoto saw his father move and collapse. He ran to his side and tugged on his gi, trying to help him up again with little success. **I told you not to drink the water!** He signed urgently, the gestures so fast that Piccolo almost couldn't follow them.

Piccolo managed to drag himself towards the stream and reached his hand out to get a handful of water when the smell of the water reached his nose. A human would never have been able to pick it up, but a Namek easily could. His onyx eyes widened and he muttered some obscenities. _Arsenicâ€|the water's full of arsenicâ€|_ All hell seemed to start breaking loose in Piccolo's body after he realized that he should have listened to Tategoto.

Tategoto didn't know what to do, and could only watch as his father briefly drew his knees close to his body before sitting up, pelted by the rain that was pouring down. Standing was out of the question, and it was getting more and more difficult to breathe.

There was a flash of lightning that illuminated the landscape brilliantly for one ten-thousandth of a second. That short instant in time was all Piccolo needed to realize that Tategoto was nowhere to be found.

Forgetting that the child wouldn't hear him, Piccolo shouted, "Tate -" the rest of the word was lost in a thunderclap. Piccolo put his hands flat on the ground, strained and managed to push himself to his feet. He fell again almost instantly when his body involuntarily doubled over on itself. The pain was becoming worse then it had been to regurgitate Tategoto's egg, but the rain washed away any tears that may have escaped.

In a last ditch attempt to get up, Piccolo grabbed onto a nearby tree and tried to pull himself up. A jolt of pain shot through his stomach, doubling him over again. This time, when he hit the ground with a dull thud, his eyes started to roll back into his head as his consciousness started to go dark.

—

Tategotoâ€|where have you gone?

—

Piccolo's eyes drifted shut when the unconsciousness became complete, and the rain poured down relentlessly, battering his crumpled emerald green form. And the poisonous arsenic from the spill continued to slowly assault his body.

—

To be continuedâ€|

—

5. Silent One: Chapter 5

> <meta name="Generator"> _silent5

Author's note: Since suspense kills, I got this part up as fast as I could ;) Don't die anybody! J/k

Silent One

> Chapter 5

Look up. Big machine with whirling blades on top that send too much vibration. Look around. Lights everywhere, flashing or shining. Confusion. Another machine that rolls along the ground with a big scoop on the front. Rain coming down everywhere. The sky keeps flashing. Run!

Those were the thoughts going on in Tategoto's mind as he dashed un-noticed through the clean-up crew that was trying to get rid of the arsenic in the water. Everything was frightening, especially the helicopters, since they slammed their intense chop-chop vibrations into Tategoto's breastbone with such force that it felt like someone was punching him in the chest.

Daddy would be brave for me if I was sick. Tategoto thought, steeling his nerves to make another run for it. The rain continued to pour down, millions of ropes hanging from the sky that battered anyone unfortunate enough to walk among them. But Tategoto didn't let the rain stop him. His feet splashed through puddles and mud as he dashed towards the city at a speed even he never knew he could run.

Less than an hour after Tategoto had started his trek across the valley, Yasmine was awakened from a sound sleep by someone pounding on her door. She threw on a wine-colored satin robe that flowed around her like water and hurried to the door. The person pounded again, harder and faster this time. When Yasmine opened the door, she was faced with a small rain-soaked and sobbing green figure.

"Tategoto?" **What are you doing here? Where is your father?**
Yasmine signed quickly.

I told him not to drink the water! Tategoto signed back, sobbing so hard that he could barely move his hands properly. **Now he is sick.**

**

How is he sick? Can you show me?

**

Tategoto nodded and imitated the way his father had doubled over and fallen, pointing to his stomach and signing that the pain must have been there. He also imitated the way Piccolo had been panting a little, then stood up and shivered from being wet and cold.

Come inside. I will get you a towel and then we will go find your father. Yasmine signed quickly, holding her hand out to the little Namekian boy. Tategoto nodded and placed his small hand into her large, delicate one and let his fingers curl around her thumb. She led him inside and signed for him to stay put, then went into her

bedroom for a towel. _It sounds like arsenic poisoningâ€|good
Lordâ€|I hope Piccolo is still alive when we find himâ€|_

--

Tategoto just shivered, wiping tears off his small face with the back of his hand as a whine escaped his throat. Yasmine returned with the towel and put it around him, gently hugging him as she did so. In spite of herself, knowing he couldn't hear her, she still whispered, "It'll be OK, Tategotoâ€|" She drew his attention to her hands and signed, **Can you take me to your father?**

** **

Tategoto made a fist and moved his hand up and down, signing the word 'yes'. Yasmine nodded to him, got her keys and led him to her sleek black hover-car. As soon as he was in the car, Tategoto pointed in the direction that his father was, his breath fogging up the window since he had his nose pressed against it. She followed where he pointed, and they reached the site of the spill in about ten minutes. Tategoto only caught a glimpse of the sign this time, but Yasmine had seen it soon enough to read what it had said.

"Buh!" Tategoto started hitting the rain-speckled window with his finger as he pointed to the pile of rocks and group of trees where he and Piccolo were camped out. He grabbed Yasmine's arm and signed, **Father is in there.**

** **

Good job. Yasmine signed back, reaching into her glove compartment for her flashlight. Tategoto had already shoved the car door open and was splashing through puddles as he ran towards where Piccolo was. Lightning flashed, but it was so far off that no thunder followed, and shimmering silver streaks of rain passed Yasmine's flashlight when she flicked it on. She managed to get the light on Tategoto long enough to see where he was going, and sprinted past him as the rain pelted her brown skin and plastered her sable hair to her face and arms.

The splashing stopped as Tategoto stopped running, and Yasmine could hear him panting. She turned the flashlight to the left slightly and could see Tategoto bending over a larger doubled-up form.

He won't wake up! The little Namek signed and started to cry, the rain washing away his tears before they could fall very far.

Yasmine hurried to Piccolo's side and handed Tategoto the flashlight, showing him where she wanted him to point it. Then she grabbed Piccolo's shoulder and rolled him onto his back. Piccolo was like a pile of rags, easily moved. White foam had formed in the corners of his mouth, and some of it had formed in a small puddle under his head. She touched his neck just below his jawline with two fingers as she brought her cheek near his mouth. _This isn't goodâ€|he's not breathing and there's no pulse! He could have been this way for a long time, there's no way to know. I have to try!_

--

Tategoto whimpered quietly as he watched Yasmine tilt Piccolo's head back, pinch his nostrils shut and place her mouth over his. She blew into his mouth, then strategically placed her hands on the center of his chest and pressed down three times.

"One, two, three!" Yasmine said aloud as she performed three chest-compressions, then pinched Piccolo's pointed nose shut and breathed into his mouth. "C'mon Piccolo! Your kid needs you!" She repeated the entire CPR process, but wasn't having much luck. Just as she was about to call it quits, she felt Piccolo's chest twitch and quickly felt for a pulse. She sighed in relief and looked at Tategoto. **Your father is OK.**

** **

Thank you. Was all Tategoto could think to sign back as he scooted closer to where Piccolo was and put his tiny hands down on his father's large chest. The rain had turned from a deluge to a light shower by then, and the blackness of the night was starting to turn gray as morning approached.

Piccolo was starting to come around, but was so far out of it that he didn't even know where he was. He was moving around, however, and Yasmine knew that this might be her only chance to move him. She grabbed his arm and threw it over her shoulder, then struggled to get him to stand. Through clenched teeth, she said, "C'mon Piccolo. It isn't too far."

The large Namekian man seemed to comply, just barely, and the progress was very slow. Even still, Yasmine managed to walk him to her car. Tategoto ran ahead and yanked the door open, allowing Yasmine to half-shove, half-drop Piccolo into the passenger's side. She motioned Tategoto to get into the back seat and climbed into the driver's seat when he did as she asked.

The sleek, ebony black hovercar turned around and sped off, disappearing from view in a short few moments.

Most of the nightmare was over. Yasmine had managed to get Piccolo out of his soaking wet clothes and made him comfortable in her bed. Knowing he would be out of it for awhile, she went into the living room to see how Tategoto was doing. When Tategoto saw Yasmine's tall, willowy dark shape exiting the hallway, he ran towards her and was just in time to be caught up in her long arms for a hug.

You were very brave. Yasmine signed, whispering the words at the same time. "Very brave!"

Tategoto smiled with a small grunt and yawned, his small mouth gaping far enough that his gleaming fangs were visible for a moment. He rubbed his eyes with a small fist and signed, **I want to sleep.**

** **

Yasmine nodded, carried Tategoto into the bedroom and settled him down on the bed next to Piccolo. Tategoto murmured quietly without

knowing he was making sounds, and hung onto Yasmine's shirt for a few seconds to keep her attention. When she turned back to him, he bent his head up, kissed her cheek, then giggled and settled down to sleep. Before he was totally asleep, he signed, **Tategoto loves Yasmine.**

** **

Smiling, Yasmine brushed his antennae back and kissed him between his brow ridges, deeply touched by what he'd said. She signed back to him, **Yasmine loves Tategoto too.**

** **

Tategoto grinned, turned over and fell almost instantly to sleep. Yasmine just smiled and looked at his little face as he slept. He looked so innocent and delicate when he was asleep, a cute little doll among the sheets. She carefully got up, walked around the bed and checked on Piccolo.

The older Namekian was breathing a lot better than he had been when he was brought in. His powerful-looking chest rose and fell slowly as he breathed, the sound of the air rushing in and out of his nostrils coming in a steady rhythm. It reminded Yasmine of the sounds waves make when they crash onto the shore and recede. Her eyes came to rest on Piccolo's face, and she couldn't help but stare in a mix of awe and another feeling she couldn't put her finger on at the moment.

In sleep, Piccolo's face had lost all the intimidating lines and wrinkles. His brow ridges, instead of being drawn together into a perpetual frown, rested like two smooth sloping plateaus on his forehead where his antennae were gently draped. Without a sneer to form wrinkles and folds in it, his pointed nose seemed almost delicate, and Yasmine could guess that when he was a child that it had been as tipped up as Tategoto's presently was. Her dark eyes continued to study Piccolo's sleeping face, admiring it for the first time. She had never seen his lips really, since they were always pressed tight together until his mouth was only a straight line across the bottom of his face. So it surprised her that they curved so beautifully, seemingly sculpted by a talented hand. All in all, Piccolo looked almost childlike when he slept, the only time when the innocence that had been taken from him in the past was allowed to show through.

Without thinking, Yasmine reached her slender hand out and slowly brushed her knuckle down the slope of his nose, then turned her hand over and gently traced his surprisngly soft lips with her fingertips. Piccolo didn't move, except to turn his head away from the touch. She moved her hand away slowly, watching to see if he was starting to wake up or not. All Piccolo did was shift his position slightly and exhale noisily through his mouth. Yasmine, figuring that she should just let him be, quietly got up and headed into the kitchen to make herself a cup of coffee.

Two seconds after she had left the room, Piccolo raised his hand slowly to his mouth and brushed his pointed white nail along his lips where her fingertips had caressed. His antennae slowly took a more erect position and his large black eyes slid open, giving only a flicker of annoyance to the vague pain in his abdomen before shifting look around. He didn't know where he was, or how he'd gotten there,

but he had the strange feeling that everything was OK. More relief came when Piccolo turned his head and saw Tategoto sound asleep. He had thought that he had lost the child, and had begun to realize how much he really did care for the boy. It no longer mattered to Piccolo that Tategoto was deaf.

Sleep well, my son. Piccolo said silently as he passed his hand over the child's forehead. Then he got up slowly and realized that all of his clothes were draped over a chair next to the bed. He wasn't too embarrassed; after all, Piccolo didn't really have much to see _down there_ anyway. But for the sake of decency, the tall Namekian man slowly climbed into his gi bottoms, too tired to put anything else on, and staggered out into the living room. He paused in the doorway and noticed the couch where he and Yasmine always sat for the sign language lessons. Knowing where he was now, Piccolo tiredly leaned his head against the doorframe and sighed, his antennae seeming to become a pair of wilted, drooping plant stems.

Yasmine was coming out of the kitchen with a steaming mug of coffee when she noticed Piccolo in the doorway. She was so surprised that he was up so soon that she almost dropped what she was carrying. "Oh! You're awake. How do you feel?" _Good Lord! This guy has one hell of a body! _She put a hand near her face to hide the fact that she was blushing.

Piccolo rubbed the back of his large hand over his face as if to wipe away the sleep, the same way Tategoto had done to wipe away tears. His deep voice came out more in a whisper, "Like shit."

Chuckling, Yasmine's satin robe flowed around her legs as she strode to the couch and sat down, placing her mug down on the end table. "Well then sit yourself down. You look like you're gonna fall over again any second."

"Thanks for noticing." Piccolo snorted sarcastically, but he complied because he was still pretty shaky on his feet. The couch sagged slightly when he sat down. "How did I get hereâ€|for that matterâ€|why am I still alive?" His voice lowered slightly, "Arsenic can kill a Namek in hours if nobody takes care of itâ€|"

"Don't thank me. Don't even bother." Yasmine smiled into her coffee mug and lifted her slender eyebrows as she took a drink.

"Whaâ€|?" Piccolo leveled his eyes with hers and frowned at her choice of words.

"I said, 'don't thank me'." She tilted her head to the side for a moment, brushing her hair over her shoulder as she set her mug down gently. Meeting Piccolo's confused gaze, she said, "Thank your son, Piccolo. He showed up on my doorstep in tears and showed me where you were."

Piccolo's protruding brow-ridges went up and his antennae seemed to stand straight out briefly as a look of genuine surprise came to his face. He composed himself quickly as a sly smirk drew a corner of his mouth up. "That damn kidâ€|" The look on his face showed that he was being sarcastic though, and Yasmine couldn't ignore the glow of pride

in his endlessly black eyes. "I thought he'd taken off on me."

"I think he loves you too much to abandon you." Yasmine paused briefly, looking down into her coffee mug and smiling as another slow blush darkened the chocolate-brown skin on her cheeks. Her lips parted and she added on in an undertone, "Just like you love him too much to abandon himâ€|"

Piccolo jerked his head to look at her again while she was looking down at her coffee mug. For a moment, his eyes traveled down to her hands as the memory of her fingers gently caressing his lips came back to his mind. He pushed the thought away, not wanting to face this odd feeling that he had no name for. However, Piccolo could not deny what Yasmine said, because it was as true as if someone had painted a bull's eye over the statement and shot it dead center with an arrow.

Yasmine raised her eyes to look at Piccolo again and said, "I'm glad you're OK. You did almost die, you know. When Tategato brought me to you, you were in total cardiac arrest." She lowered her eyes again to her coffee mug as she took another sip.

Blinking once, Piccolo unconsciously touched his chest as if to see if his heart was still beating. Feeling stupid that he did so, he curled his fingers into a fist, quickly moved his hand and let it come to rest at his side. "Is Tategato OK? I meanâ€|the kid must have freaked."

"He'll be OK. I took care of him while you were recovering."

Piccolo nodded silently, almost to himself as he got up to go back into the room and get the rest of his clothes on. He paused for a moment while his back was to Yasmine, feeling comfortable enough to speak to her when they weren't making eye contact. "Hey."

Yasmine replied, "Yeah?"

"Thanks."

Yasmine was a bit surprised to actually hear Piccolo say that word. The way he'd said it, it wasn't growled or snapped. Just a whisper and nothing more. She looked up just in time to see his broad green back, with muscles that rippled with each graceful movement of his arms and shoulders, disappear into the room where his clothes were. She could barely see into the room, just catching glimpses of a green arm or hand as Piccolo wriggled his gi top over his head and stepped into his shoes.

"You're welcome." Yasmine whispered. She caught herself staring at him again and rolled her eyes at herself, wandered back to the couch and flopped down with a sigh. The memory of Piccolo's face while he slept suddenly came to mind, and she smiled. As she brushed her long hair back with a sweep of her hand and picked up her coffee mug to take a sip, Yasmine quietly said to herself, "Piccoloâ€|I think I'm falling for youâ€|"

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To be continuedâ€|

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6. Silent One: Chapter

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